

Partner School and Partner Teacher Newsletter



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Special points of interest:

- Check out the refuge event calendar http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Minnesota_Valley/Events.html
- Make sure to look at the art gallery outside classroom A and B in Bloomington, featuring local artist

Tracks...Trails...and the Art of Questioning

The Practicum interns and volunteers had the wonderful opportunity to participate in a winter training with Donnie Phyllaier, learning all about snowshoes and tracking wildlife. Donnie, who has been volunteering at Minnesota Valley for many years is an expert when it comes to snowshoes! With his collection of authentic snowshoes the participants were able to test out the different styles that originated from across the country. Trainings like this better prepare the practicum to teach, share their enthusiasm and fascinating information with you and especially the students! We are keeping our fingers crossed that more snow falls so that every student that visits has the opportunity to snowshoe around refuge this winter!



Free Winter Events at the Refuge

Saturday, February 6th

8:00 a.m. -10:00 a.m. *Bird Watching Trek* (Bass Ponds)

Join us for a winter season bird walk. Bring along your binoculars, favorite field guide and dress appropriately for the weather as we search for overwintering species of birds on the Refuge. Led by Craig Mandel, Volunteer Refuge Naturalist

9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. *Bird Language* (Classroom A)

Join us as we gather on the slopes of the Minnesota River Valley to explore what the birds are telling us about our surroundings. Bring a notebook, pencils, and something to sit on outdoors. Led by Donnie Phyllaier, Volunteer Refuge Naturalist To register visit: <http://www.mntracking.org/>

Saturday, February 27th

1:00-2:30 p.m. *Family Snowshoe Hike*

Discover a fun new way to explore outside in winter! Explore the river valley and look for animal tracks. Recommended for families with children ages 8 and up. Snowshoes are provided at no cost. Led by Judy Geck, Refuge Ranger

2:30-3:30 p.m. *Battle for Bats: Surviving White-Nose Syndrome*

Bats are captivating animals and are also a vital part of our ecosystem. Learn how beneficial bats are as pollinators and insect eaters, and discover how scientists are working together to stop a deadly disease.

Winter Field Trip Reminders

Please remind chaperones and students to dress warmly for the winter weather. Coats, gloves, scarves, hats, snow boots, and thick socks. Bringing an extra pair of socks is encouraged. Sneakers are a no-no (snowshoes constantly fall off). Plan for at least 5 to 10 minutes to put away snowshoes after your program.

In Rapids Lake: Snowshoes are now marked with either **L** (Left) or **R** (Right). Numbers are classified by size (1 = youth-sized snowshoes, 2 = middle-sized snowshoes, 3 = adult-sized snowshoes) and should be put away with like sizes.

In Bloomington: Only the **right** snowshoes are painted with an R. Please put them away with like styles and in pairs when you are finished. Your group will exit and return from the nearby door with a map that directs you to the closest trail access.

Refer to the **How to Put on Snowshoes** wall posters for a step-by-step guide you and your chaperones can follow.



All Winter Field Trip Invoices are due by March 15



Why not stop by over the weekend and explore winter?

Remember, Refuge snowshoes are available for loan (free of charge) so bring your friends and family for some great winter exercise!

NEW Winter Hours for Bloomington
Tuesday - Saturday
9:00am-4:00pm

Partnership with China

This November six Chinese delegates visited our refuge and toured the Twin Cities to learn more about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the outstanding Environmental Education Program we provide at Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

China and the USFWS have a bilateral exchange program that has been developing over four years. Delegates from both countries have traveled back and forth to share and learn about the wildlife research and conservation approaches of each country. While at the refuge, both parties signed an agreement which created the official partnership between Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge and Chongqing Jinyunshan National Nature Reserve.



Bumblebee
By U.S. FWS

Partner School Student Art Show and Pollinator Month

Coming this June, participating Partner School students will be creating art for a special feature in our professional art gallery.

This year's art theme is Pollinators! Pollinators, such as most bees and some birds, bats, and other insects, play a crucial role in flowering plant reproduction and in the production of most fruits and vegetables. A recent study of the status of pollinators in North America by the National Academy of Sciences found that populations of honey bees (which are not native to North America) and some wild pollinators are declining. Students will be learning about pollinators at the refuge and in the classroom and will then create works of art with a pollinator focus.

An artist reception will be held on Saturday June 4th. In addition to highlighting the student art work, the refuge will host an array of guests including local artists who will be giving talks and art demonstrations! Everyone is welcome to attend and busing may be available from your school.

We will also be celebrating June as Pollinator Month. The refuge will be hosting great events that promote pollinators and ways to improve habitat for these important species. Stay tuned for more information!

Highlight on Volunteers

Volunteers are an essential part of our team! They help us with a mammoth amount of tasks on a daily basis. We are so thankful for their wonderful help, especially with our Partner School field trips! Get to know each of our field trip volunteers below and thank them for their time and dedication to environmental education on your next field trip.

Amber Taylor



I have taught students of all ages as a science teacher in a formal classroom setting and as an environmental educator at a nature center. As a new volunteer at MVNWR, I am excited to be a part of the EE program and have the opportunity to work with children as they explore and learn about nature.

Doris Ikier

I always wanted to be a national park ranger! My family started traveling & camping in the 1950's. By the time I was in 5th grade, we had visited 49 of the US states and most of the Canadian provinces. We camped in national parks before they had formal campgrounds. Since then I have travel extensively in North America and throughout the world. In April, 2014, I retired as a Clinical Laboratory Scientist working in the Allina Molecular Diagnostics Laboratory. Volunteering at the Minnesota Valley NWR was my dream come true! In addition to traveling & camping, I love hiking with my Welsh corgi, X-country skiing, biking, kayaking or canoeing, orienteering, reading, and playing the piano.



Marcia Lewis



I have been a volunteer at the Refuge for 10 years, doing everything from pulling garlic mustard and other invasive species to planting rain gardens to leading public programs to assisting with environmental education classes. I love it all! My background is education, teaching both children and adults, so this is a great opportunity for me to get outside and share nature's wonders with others without the formality of creating lesson plans, grading, and staff meetings. Every day at the Refuge is a new experience and it's a privilege to spend time outdoors with knowledgeable, dedicated staff and enthusiastic learners.



Kelsey Depew

I am originally from Northwest Iowa, and grew up surrounded by the outdoors. I love to travel to new places to explore wildlife and find exciting adventures. In my spare time, I adore enjoying the outdoors with recreation activities (any and all) with my husband, reading inspiring books, practicing yoga, and capturing nature with a camera or video camera. MN Valley NWR is an amazing place where loads of people experience nature for the first time, and I want to continue being apart of that magic.

If you, or someone you know, would like more information about volunteering at Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge please contact Sarah Inouye-Leas at 952-858-0724 or Sarah_Inouye@fws.gov

Practicum Intern Fall Favorites

Favorite Field Trip:

Habitat: Who Needs It? During a kindergarten field trip, we saw a juvenile red-tailed hawk up close, our resident flock of turkeys and a large white-tailed deer buck all in a 45 minute outing! Sometimes you just get lucky I tell the kids, you will never know what you will find in the wild! -Sophie



Prairie Insect Survey : This was one of my first field trips as a practicum intern and it was so much fun! The students were able to independently explore the refuge in groups and the amount of insects they found was amazing. They learned about taxonomy and they always surprise me with how much they know, everyday teaching me something new too. -Elise

Favorite Experience:

Getting to find exciting new discoveries with the kids! It is so fun watching them explore and sharing their discoveries. By being observant and inquisitive, we found this tiny bird's nest and a bright pair of mushrooms with a snail and slug on it! -Sophie



Its hard to pick just one! I'd have to say every time we get outside with the students is my favorite. They have a sense of wonder that is so much fun , they always point me to something new that I have not seen before. -Elise



Favorite Opportunity:

I was able to help out with a breakout session at the U of M Ecology Fair! Each year students develop an ecologically-focused project and present it to other students and adults . We led a session during the fair about animal adaptations. Students created animals with unique adaptations fitted to biomes from around the world! -Sophie



I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to develop a program to get more high school students to the refuge. I love working with elementary students but I am excited to introduce the older age group. Although it is still in the very beginning stages I love hearing the ways in which they are excited to take part at the refuge. -Elise



Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge

Rapids Lake Education and Visitor Center
15865 Rapids Lake Road
Carver, MN 55315
(952) 361-4500

Bloomington Education and Visitor Center
3815 American Blvd. East
Bloomington, MN 55425
(952) 854-5900



The Blue Goose Bus Fund Update

Fall 2015

Student visits: 2,956
Chaperone visits: 628

Thanks to our Refuge Friends Inc. for providing
\$7,821 in busing reimbursement this season.

Check us out our social media sites:

http://www.fws.gov/refuge/minnesota_valley

<https://www.facebook.com/MNvalleyNWR>

<https://twitter.com/USFWSmnvalley>

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/usfwsmidwest>

Thanks for reading our Winter
Newsletter!

Mention this newsletter on your
refuge field trip and receive a
FREE nature poster for your
classroom.



Thanks for a great fall field
trip season!



EE Cohort: Teachers Sharing Ideas About the Outdoor Classroom

Find this Group On Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/EECOHORT>

We are currently assembling a list of *Environmental Education Mentors* willing to share their expertise with a local teacher looking for help incorporating EE into their classroom teaching.

Call Suzanne Trapp at (952) 361-4502 for more information, to register as a

2016 Spring Partner Teacher Training

Spring Curriculum Training: Due to staffing limitations, this year's spring training will be available by invitation only and held at the Rapids Lake Education and Visitor Center in Carver. **Please watch your email and respond by March 1st to reserve your spot.**

Stream Table Demonstration Model: Now available for use by **trained** Partner Teachers teaching grades 5 or higher, the stream table is only available for use at the Rapids Lake Education and Visitor Center. Typically used in conjunction with the Landforms curriculum, this hands-on model simulates the effects moving water has on the landscape. Space is extremely limited for this training. **Please RSVP to Suzanne_Trapp@fws.gov by April 11th to participate.**

For directions to the Rapids Lake Education and Visitor Center
http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Minnesota_Valley/visit/plan_your_visit.html

2016 Partner Teacher Spring Scheduling

March 10 - 20

The registration link will be sent out
via email the first week in March.

Email or phone call reservations will
be accepted after March 20.